

*Otis Kinser:* I know the place where he was killed at on Blair Mountain.

*Interviewer:* Where is that?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah. It was – I always called it the John Gore Holler, see? When I go hunting, going squirrel hunting.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* I told you sometimes when we go across Blair Mountain Holler I'm going to show you the place, but I'll show you there in the edge of the hollow they killed, he was killed, and then show you where they loaded him up at when they hauled him out.

*Interviewer:* Where'd they take him after they killed him? Did they haul him out of there?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah, they took him to a funeral home.

*Interviewer:* Hmm. Just three guys were killed?

*Otis Kinser:* He was – people come – travel all hours of the night to get security, you see. He was afraid. Somebody tell me, union members coming, and they would get out of the way, see? They – a lot of people believed that the union men was – wasn't humans, you know what I mean? They loved the wives' stories about them, see? They called them rednecks.

*Interviewer:* Do you know why that was?

*Otis Kinser:* Huh?

*Interviewer:* Do you know why that was?

*Otis Kinser:* Uh-uh.

*Interviewer:* Well, you know, it's because when they were up in Charleston and they started marching down here, they wanted to identify themselves, so the people – so their own men wouldn't shoot them, and they tied these big red handkerchiefs –

*Otis Kinser:* Red bandana. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* – around their necks, so that their own men would recognize them. And that's where they called them rednecks.

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* And then tell them the rednecks was coming, and it was – you know, people thought they was outlaws. They wasn't. They were rednecks as he called them trying to help them, was what they was trying to do. But they couldn't get them to stick together.

*Interviewer:* Who spread those stories around? Who was telling them that the rednecks were against them?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, people that was paid to that, you see. To scare them about the rednecks, you see?

*Interviewer:* That's real interesting.

*Interviewee 2:* What was John Gore?  
Was he just a –

*Otis Kinser:* He was a thug. He was a thug. Yeah. What they called a thug.

*Interviewee 2:* Against the union?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah, sure.

*Interviewee 2:* And Papa was, too?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah. Sure.

*Interviewer:* So it wasn't – so most of the miners down here were – thought that the union was against them?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, there was a few – enough – a few – there was enough to help them, you see. I don't know how many there was. But they was paid to – by the sheriff of Logan County.

*Interviewee 2:* There was some former man was gonna get his citizenship papers once, and they asked him who was President of the United States?

*Otis Kinser:* Oh, it was Nick \_\_\_\_\_,  
Italian.

*Interviewee 2:* He said Don Luce.

*Interviewer:* What was it?

*Otis Kinser:* Asked him who made  
the laws of the United States. He said, Don Luce.

*Interviewer:* Well, I guess he pretty  
much did make the law back then.

*Otis Kinser:* He did. What he said  
was law in Logan County.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* What he said was law in  
Logan County.

*Interviewer:* That's what I figured.

*Otis Kinser:* He never did bother me,  
because I never did give him a chance to.

*Interviewer:* You know, I talked to  
someone today who told me this story about how – this was a lady, and her father had  
been a friend of Don Chafin's, and he had gone out – he was a peddler. He peddled  
candy. And he had papers from – see, like everybody in the county that was going to do  
any peddling had to have papers signed by Don Chafin that, you know, this was okay,  
that he was a friend of Chafin's. And this guy had these papers, and he was out one day,  
and this guy came up to him and he said, have you got papers from Chafin? And he said,  
yes. The guy shot him in the back so he could steal his papers, because they were so  
valuable. Like you just – you couldn't – you couldn't go anywhere without those papers  
from that guy. You know? Because he just controlled everything.

*Otis Kinser:* They had a paper out  
one time, the coal companies did, see? They called it the yellow dog. And they had  
means to, you know, get a job. If you got a job, you had to sign your name on that paper,  
and you signed the yellow dog. I signed it.

*Interviewer:* You signed the yellow  
dog?

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am. I had to, if I got a job.

*Interviewer:* And that said you couldn't – wouldn't join the union?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, no, it didn't say that. It said I wouldn't – well, I can't explain it exactly, what the paper is. Anyhow, you wouldn't befriend no union man, you know, what I mean.

*Interviewer:* I see.

*Otis Kinser:* If you – you know? If – you wouldn't let one tell a night with you, you see?

*Interviewee 2:* You know, it's just been awful, what we've been going through. They had families.

*Otis Kinser:* Well, if I knew I had to go through with what I have with through with, I'd commit sideways. I'd commit hari-kari.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. You know, my mother used to use that expression all the time. I never knew what she meant. Commit hari-kari. And then she just explained it to me, so I know what it means now.

*Otis Kinser:* I don't hear that too much anymore.

*Interviewee 2:* You're not from Logan, are you?

*Interviewer:* No, I'm from Charleston.

*Interviewee 2:* I thought you – I  
[inaudible] \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_.

*Otis Kinser:* You married?

*Interviewer:* No.

*Interviewee 2:* [inaudible]

*Otis Kinser:* Neither am I.

Interviewee 2: Is Charlie the one I booked? Or?

Interviewer: You know, actually, I work in Charleston. I don't work for Charlie. I've just been over there talking to him today.

Interviewee 2: Oh, I see.

Interviewer: So that's what he said. So I don't know what we're going to do with this material. We just – we figure that none of this history has been recorded. You know, nobody knows what happened in Logan. We wanted to –

Interviewee 2: Pretty soon, the whole damn county \_\_\_\_\_.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee 2: Probably most of them you don't know, because I know \_\_\_\_\_ all and I like my daddy \_\_\_\_\_ old person.

Otis Kinser: Seventy-two. Not young.

Interviewee 2: You're not quite 72 yet.

Otis Kinser: No, I'll soon be.

Interviewee 2: People will be back up in coal [inaudible] before we live to daddy's age. [inaudible] Daddy's tough.

Interviewer: Yeah. Pretty tough.

Otis Kinser: Look here.

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Otis Kinser: When she was little, about that big, and – well, and then about that big, I didn't see her until Sunday. I worked – went to work at 5:30, and – every morning, and quit at 11 o'clock at night.

Interviewer: That's – yeah. It's good it's not that way anymore.

Otis Kinser: I'm glad it's not.

Interviewer: Because fathers should see their children.

Otis Kinser: I'm a Democrat, too.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Well, what do you think of the convention? Have you been watching that or listening to another \_\_\_\_\_?

[Crosstalk]

Otis Kinser: I didn't like it myself.

Interviewer: What did you say?

Otis Kinser: I didn't like it myself.

Interviewer: I don't know whether I liked it or not, because I got too tired. I couldn't stay up that late. And they went on just forever.

Otis Kinser: Well, I never seen all of it, because I go to bed pretty early myself.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.. So can you remember any other stories to tell me about –

Otis Kinser: No, ma'am. I forgot everything I knew, I reckon. I – maybe I thought I would never forget that but I had to. I forgot it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, I was wondering. You said that there were a few guys back there in the twenties that – that weren't scared off, that still wanted – that wanted a union.

Otis Kinser: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now had they been North? Had they talked to people up North? Is that why they sort of –

Otis Kinser: Well, I'll tell you that there was a – I can't remember nothing, but now listen, they was fellows that went up there to keep them out. And I knew lots of them then, you see. And after they got the union in, well, they made good union men. They made good union men. Made officers in the union.

*Interviewer:* The same ones that had been –

*Otis Kinser:* Ma'am?

*Interviewer:* I'm not sure I understand. The same men who –

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah, who went up there. I know lots of them, but I don't – can't recall their names.

*Interviewer:* The same ones that had gone up North?

*Otis Kinser:* Had went up and fought them to keep them back, see.

*Interviewer:* Really? No kidding.

*Otis Kinser:* Went up on Blair Mountain, and then the union give them a job, and they made good union men.

*Interviewer:* That sounds like a real change of heart, doesn't it?

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

*Interviewer:* How do you explain that? Isn't that funny?

*Otis Kinser:* And I'll tell you, there's a creator up above, you see. Well, you asked me my opinion, and I know. And he rules everything. But then people goes ahead and uses their own way, but they don't last long. Do you belong to the church?

*Interviewer:* I'm a Quaker.

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Do you know what a Quaker is?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah? Do you have an ashtray there? Do you want – here, why don't you sit this here?

*Otis Kinser:* Don't you want to smoke?

*Interviewer:* No, I'm not – no, thanks. You know, that just seems so strange to me, that those guys would have been the same ones to have gone up and fought on that mountain, and then they turned around and joined the union.

*Otis Kinser:* You'd be surprised to talk to one of them. You'd be surprised to hear one of them talk. You see, different you see. Plumb different. Maybe they was – they made good union men, good men to work with. I worked with lots of them. And I'll tell you, I learned to keep my mouth shut at times, to keep from getting my head beat off.

*Interviewer:* That was back before the union?

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am.

*Interviewer:* After the union came in, would you speak out more about what was going on?

*Otis Kinser:* I'll tell you, you could give – you'd get along all right, because you had protection. See, before the union came in, you didn't have protection. The law didn't – that they – took something else, you see? They was for the thugs.

*Interviewer:* Right. Now these guys who were union officers, you know, union officers, did they – did they fight for you? Did they fight for the miners? Did they fight for you?

*Otis Kinser:* The union officers?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* No, they – you know, they – yeah, they tried to get the union in, you see. Union officers.

*Interviewer:* But you think that they said what you believed, you know? Like if you had a grievance –

*Otis Kinser:* Ma'am?



*Interviewer:* If you had a grievance, a complaint against say your foreman in the mine, could you go to the union, and would they help you out?

*Otis Kinser:* Oh, yeah. Sure. But, see, you see, before they had one, see, you could – if you said anything, you got barred, blackballed. If you said anything against the mine, you see. I just learned to keep my mouth shut, because I had a living to make, and I wanted to make it here, you see.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Otis Kinser:* And so I just kept my mouth shut. I didn't do anything, and say anything. There's a lot of things I wanted to say, but I was afraid to say it.

*Interviewer:* Like what kind of thing would you have said?

*Otis Kinser:* Ma'am?

*Interviewer:* What kind of thing would you have said, if you had been allowed to say it?

*Otis Kinser:* I'm afraid to tell you.

*Interviewer:* Oh, don't be afraid.

*Otis Kinser:* I just – you know what I mean? I'd have said a lot of things to somebody, you see? I wouldn't go behind their back and say it, and I wouldn't say it in front of them, see? I just kept it to myself.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Otis Kinser:* I'm 72 - almost 72 years old, and was never served with a warrant in my life, never was inside of a jail in my life. That's the truth.

*Interviewer:* Mhm. That's very, very good.

*Otis Kinser:* I'm not bragging on myself, trying to pat myself on the back, because I just told you the truth. But other things I've seen people do, you know, that was awful. It's awful to see somebody that you know get pistol-whipped. I called it pistol-whipped, you see. Blackjack or a pistol, just jerk out a big pistol, hit somebody across the head. I was pretty bad to drink \_\_\_\_ liquor. You know what I mean.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* I didn't short nobody, but I drank a whole lotta liquor. And I've been in a gang where they was drinking liquor, somebody would say something kindly funny, and throw his head up out the way, maybe three or four pistols would shoot at him before he'd come down.

*Interviewer:* Ooh.

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah. Different times.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* Deputy sheriffs would do that.

*Interviewer:* Yeah?

*Otis Kinser:* That's why I mean thugs.  
It was thugs. They called them deputies then, but they was thugs.

*Interviewer:* Sounds like a real rough bunch. Now did – none of them joined the union afterwards, did they?

*Otis Kinser:* Ma'am?

*Interviewer:* None of them joined the union?

*Otis Kinser:* No, ma'am, but I'll tell you, they's – like I told you a minute ago, they's fellows that I know that fought the union, was against it – you know what I mean? Was against it, see?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Otis Kinser:* And that later on would  
– they joined the union and made good union men. It's true. Made good union men.  
Raised nice families. And was honest.

*Interviewer:* Can you explain that to me?

*Otis Kinser:* Huh?

*Interviewer:* Can you explain that to me, why that was?

*Otis Kinser:* No, ma'am. Good treatment is all I can tell you. They got good treatment. You know, the – probably they seen their mistakes.

*Interviewer:* Ah.

*Otis Kinser:* And corrected them.

*Interviewer:* Do you remember – I was wondering, you know, a lot of these guys who were thugs around here, now were those guys who had fought in World War I, who had been in the Army and came back and still had some of their Army weapons and that stuff?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, no. They just – that's the county, you see. The sheriff furnished the guns and ammunition. All he had to do was take out a rifle and plenty of ammunition, just to go and tell the sheriff – excuse me. And he'd furnish you the gun and ammunition. That's all you had to do.

*Interviewer:* I see. Did you ever know of a time when outside people, like federal government troops, came in here, or –

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am. I remember them coming in. I don't remember what year. It seemed to me like it might have been '23. I'm not sure.

*Interviewer:* Why did they come down?

*Otis Kinser:* To stop this – to stop this – Blair Mountain war, they called it. They had tents, you know, Army camps. And it's been so long, I can't remember nothing, honey. But I seen a lot, but don't – I can't remember.

*Interviewer:* I think you told me a whole lot, and it's been real interesting to me.

*Otis Kinser:* Well, now, I done the best I could do.

*Interviewer:* Well, this was real nice. I really appreciate this.

*Otis Kinser:* Thank you.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. I was just – I just really enjoy talking to people about this stuff. It's just real interesting. It's very – it's like hard, because this country is pretty peaceful now, to think that –

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am.

*Interviewee 2:* Can I hand you a cup of coffee?

*Interviewer:* No, thanks.

*Interviewee 2:* Glass of Coke?

*Interviewer:* No, thanks a lot. But –

*Otis Kinser:* Long time ago I could give you a drink of moonshine.

*Interviewer:* We don't have that around too much.

*Otis Kinser:* I never did make it, but I drank lots of it.

*Interviewer:* That's fun. Charlie told me about that. He said there was a lot of bootlegging around here, is what he said.

*Otis Kinser:* Charlie's a good man.

*Interviewer:* Oh, he was real nice.  
Yeah. You know, I heard –

*Interviewee 2:* Did he by any chance tell you to talk to Denny Cheeks?

*Interviewer:* No. Who is Denny Cheeks?

*Interviewee 2:* Denny probably remembers the famous [inaudible].

[Crosstalk]

*Otis Kinser:* Union Mines before you and your cutting loaf and I \_\_\_\_ what they called Kanawha Fields up there?

*Interviewer:* Oh, up north there?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah, it was Logan County, you see? Mifflin was the place I worked in. Mifflin.

*Interviewer:* Mm-hmm. Hi.

*Otis Kinser:* That's my old granddaughter who walked along there.

*Interviewer:* Why did you come south here, if you were working in a union mine?

*Otis Kinser:* Ma'am?

*Interviewer:* Why did you come to Logan?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, this is my home.

*Interviewer:* You were born here?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah. I was born in Logan County. It's pretty hard to run your way from your home. My daddy was – my father was 111 years old.

*Interviewer:* No kidding!

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am. Charlie knows him. Charlie Hilton knows him.

*Interviewer:* Honestly. Did he work in the mines, too?

*Otis Kinser:* Yes, ma'am. He worked in the mines, blacksmith. He worked around the mines. He was supposed to be a farmer.

*Interviewer:* Hmm. So he did – he did both?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Must have been a lot of guys who were your father's age who were both farmers and miners.

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* How did he feel about the coal industry coming in here?

*Otis Kinser:* Well, I don't know, because he was an old man ever since I could remember. See he was – he was – had a big gray beard come down to there when I was born, when I remember him, see? First memory of a big gray beard.

*Interviewee 2:* Daddy's mother was middle-aged when he was born.

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah.

*Interviewee 2:* Well –

*Otis Kinser:* Going on fifty-two years old.

*Interviewer:* No kidding. I didn't know you could have babies at 52.

*Interviewee 2:* I didn't, either.

*Interviewer:* Honestly.

*Interviewee 2:* See, if Grandpa was 111, and he died when I was -

*Otis Kinser:* She can do memory, can't you?

*[Crosstalk]*

*Interviewee 2:* He died when I was about 12 – I'll say about 12 years old. And that was late June when I was 12.

*Otis Kinser:* Forty-three. He died in '43.

*Interviewee 2:* In '43?

*Otis Kinser:* Yeah. I was 43 years old.

Interviewee 2: When he died?

Otis Kinser: Yeah.

Interviewee 2: But then he was about  
70 – how old would he have been when you was born?

Otis Kinser: I don't know.

Interviewee 2: He was pretty old, wasn't  
he?

Otis Kinser: Yeah.

Interviewee 2: Sixty – let's see, 43 from  
111.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee 2: Forty-three from 100 is  
60. He was almost 70 when you was born.

Otis Kinser: Sure.

Interviewer: I didn't know could be  
fathers at –

Interviewee 2: Daddy was the baby of  
13 children. Thirteen? Nine?

Otis Kinser: Ten.

Interviewee 2: And you weighed 13  
pounds.

Otis Kinser: Huh?

Interviewee 2: You weighed 13 pounds.

Otis Kinser: Yeah.

Interviewer: That would be as if you  
were a father right now, right?

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Just about. Funny story.  
Honestly. Well, this is real interesting. I think I'll go over and see if I can find Danny. Do you know how I get on the road to **Holden**?

*Interviewee 2:* Yeah. From here?

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*[Background noise]*

*Interviewer:* No, I don't.

*Interviewee 2:* Did Daddy tell you he  
had a brother-in-law and uh, some of his family up there?

*Interviewer:* In Charleston?

*Interviewee 2:* In South Charleston,  
close to Mill Road.

*Otis Kinser:* No.

*Interviewee 2:* Where?

*Otis Kinser:* Snowhill –

*Interviewee 2:* Drive?

*Otis Kinser:* Drive. Up – that's up  
above the capitol, up – you know \_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Right.

*[Crosstalk]*

*Interviewee 2:* And Janette married  
some – his daughter Janette, I guess she'd been \_\_\_\_.

*Interviewer:* Hmm.

*Interviewee 2:* \_\_\_\_ place.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. That's right. I  
don't really know everybody there, that's for sure. Well, thanks a lot.

*Otis Kinser:* You're welcome.



*Interviewee 2:*

And good luck.

*Interviewer:*

Bye bye, Otis. Yeah.

*Interviewee 2:*  
with us.

Stay and have supper

*Interviewer:*  
on –

Well, I think I will get

*[Crosstalk]*

*Interviewee 2:*  
cornbread.

- fried potatoes and

*Interviewer:*

Oh, boy.

*Interviewee 2:*  
weather, because we –

That's enough for hot

*Interviewer:*  
hot weather.

You're not so hungry in

*Interviewee 2:*

Hmm-mm, and we – and I get up and fry bacon and eggs every morning for breakfast anyway, and then by the time we eat that, and then snack around all day long. And the boys, I've got two growing boys, and they're both gone. And so right now there's only me and Daddy and the baby here to eat. So I'm just going to fry some –

*[Crosstalk]*

*[End of Audio]*